

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2352

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FOR AMBASSADOR MCCLOSKEY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS/ PFOR, SP, US

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CORTENA

REF: A) MADRID 4674; B) MADRID 4676

1. FOREIGN MINISTER CORENA ASKED TO SEE ME LATER THIS MORNING ON VERY SHORT NOTICE. ALTHOUGH I WAS NOT TOLD THE SUBJECT BY PERINAT (WHO CALLED ME), I ASSUMED (CORRECTLY AS IT TURNED OUT) THAT IT WAS TO DO WITH PRESS ARTICLES MENTIONED IN REFTEL A.

2. CORTENA RECEIVED ME ALONE AND SAID HE WAS DISTURBED BY THE "DECLARATIONS" IN THE PRESS FROM OUR SIDE REGARDING THE NEGOTIATIONS. THIS WAS NOT A PROPER WAY TO CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS AND HE DID NOT WISH TO BE DRAWN INTO A SITUATION WHERE HE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO MAKE STATEMENTS, DENIALS, ETC. SPANISH PRESS WAS PRESSING FOREIGN OFFICE TO COMMENT ON STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO US SIDE.

3. I TOLD CORTENA THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR CUSTOM YOU HAD HELD "BACKGROUNDER" FOR US CORRESPONDENTS, BUT THAT I COULD ASSURE HIM, BASED ON CONVERSATION I HAD WITH YOU, THAT WE WERE IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT THAT NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD NOT BE CONDUCTED THROUGH THE PRESS. I SAID THAT I KNEW THAT YOU HAD BEEN MOST CAREFUL AND CIRCUMSPECT WITH RESPECT TO WHAT YOU HAD SAID. MOREOVER, I POINTED OUT THAT I NOTED (REF B) THAT THE

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MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND TOURISM, FOLLOWING YESTERDAY'S

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING HAD COMMENTED ON THE NEGOTIATIONS TO THE EFFECT THAT THEY RELATED TO DEFINING A "NEW AGREEMENT" AND THAT THEY CONCERNED TWO ASPECTS, ONE BEING THE PURELY US-SPANISH RELATIONSHIP, AND THE OTHER, THE INDIRECT PARTICIPATION OF SPAIN, THROUGH THE US, IN CONTRIBUTING TO WESTERN EUROPEAN DEFENSE. CORTINA COMMENTED THAT THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION HAD SAID NOTHING NEW - HE (CORTINA) HAD SEEN TO THAT. I RESPONDED THAT I WAS CERTAIN THAT YOU, WITH YOUR LONG AND WIDE EXPERIENCE WITH THE PRESS, HAD FOLLOWED THE SAME PRACTICE IN YOUR "BACKGROUNDER" AND THAT MUCH OF WHAT HAD BEEN IN THE PRESS TODAY WAS SPECULATION.

4. I WENT ON TO POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT ONE OF THE US CORRESPONDENTS WHO ATTENDED THE "BACKGROUNDER" HAD COME QUITE WELL PREPARED WITH REGARD TO THE SPANISH MILITARY EQUIPMENT LIST AND THE ONE BILLION 500 HUNDRED MILLION FIGURE. I TOLD CORTINA THAT, SPEAKING QUITE FRANKLY, THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT THIS CORRESPONDENT'S INFORMATION CAME FROM SPANISH SOURCES.

5. WE ENDED THIS PART OF THE DISCUSSION ON A FRIENDLY NOTE WITH RENEWED ASSURANCES ON BOTH SIDES THAT THERE WAS NO DESIRE (IN FACT QUITE THE CONTRARY) TO NEGOTIATE THROUGH THE PRESS. (COMMENT: CORTINA IS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE ON THIS ISSUE AND INDEED APOSTUA WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THE ARTICLE DESCRIBED IN PARA 1 REFTEL A MADE QUITE CLEAR YESTERDAY AT MY JULY 4 RECEPTION THAT HE FELT CORTINA AND FOREIGN OFFICE WERE NOT TREATING SPANISH PRESS FAIRLY BY NOT "BACKGROUNDING" THEM. CORTINA IS PARTICULARLY CRITICIZED FOR HIS KEEPING PRESS AT ARM'S LENGTH.

6. CORTINA THEN WENT ON TO REFER TO HIS CONVERSATION WITH YOU AND ME ON JULY 3. HE SAID THAT IN THINKING IT OVER HE HAD CONCLUDED THE UK ALONE WAS THE KEY TO THE PROBLEM. IF WE COULD PERSUADE THE UK TO CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE AND RECOGNIZE THE REALITY OF TODAY'S WORLD WITH RESPECT TO SPAIN, THEN DENMARK, HOLLAND, NORWAY AND BELGIUM WOULD FOLLOW. HE MADE NO MENTION OF ITALY. IF WE COULD NOT GET UK TO CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE, THEN THIS WOULD PRESENT SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS IN US-SPANISH DEFENSE RELATIONS.

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7. I TOLD CORTINA THAT YOU AND I HAD TAKEN FULL NOTE OF WHAT HE HAD SAID LAST THURSDAY AND THAT HE HAD MADE THE SPANISH POSITION QUITE CLEAR. YOU WOULD, OF COURSE, REPORT FULLY TO THE SECRETARY. I THEN SAID THAT, SPEAKING FRANKLY, I SAW LITTLE OR NO PROSPECT OF ACHIEVING A CHANGE IN THE UK'S ATTITUDE. WE HAD DISCUSSED THIS QUESTION FULLY WITH THE UK AND THE

PRESENT GOVERNMENT WAS QUITE UNWILLING TO MODIFY ITS POSITION. I DID NOT SEE HOW A FURTHER APPROACH AT THIS TIME WOULD SUCCEED AND IT SEEMED TO ME GOS WAS BEING UNREALISTIC IN EXPECTING OTHERWISE. I SUGGESTED THAT IF PRESENT GOS ATTITUDE WERE PURSUED, SERIOUS PROBLEMS WOULD INDEED ARISE IN US-SPANISH DEFENSE RELATIONS.

8. I THEN ASKED CORTINA IF HE COULD TELL ME WHY HE WAS SO SURE OF FRENCH SUPPORT FOR CLOSER SPANISH RELATIONSHIP WITH WESTERN DEFENSE. HIS REPLY WAS RATHER RAMBLING. IT SEEMED TO ADD UP TO THE NOTION THAT AS FRANCE HAS A SPECIAL POSITION AS A MEMBER OF THE ALLIANCE, BUT NOT AS A MEMBER OF NATO, SHE, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE GERMANS, CAN COME UP WITH SOME SCHEME TO SATISFY THE SPANISH PROBLEM. HE ALSO SEEMED TO IMPLY THAT THE FRENCH AIMED IN SOME FASHION TO ATTEMPT TO SUPPLANT US AS SPAIN'S PRINCIPAL FOREIGN PARTNER. (COMMENT: PERHAPS THE FRENCH SUGGESTED THAT IF THE US COULD BRING THE UK ALONG, ALL WOULD BE WELL. IF NOT, THEN PERHAPS FRANCE, GERMANY AND SPAIN OUGHT TO WORK OUT THE DEFENSE PROBLEM IN ANOTHER WAY.) CORTINA INDICATED THAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY GISCARD THAT AT HIS MEETING WITH CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT ON JULY 30, GISCARD WOULD DISCUSS THE SPANISH QUESTION FULLY. CORTINA CLEARLY EXPECTS SOME IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT AS A RESULT OF THE GISCARD-SCHMIDT MEETING.

9. COMMENT: IF MIGHT BE USEFUL TO GET A READING FROM PARIS AND BONN ON THE LATEST THINKING IN THOSE CAPITALS. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR HERE (WHO WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE GISCARD-CORTINA MEETING) HAS RATHER DOWNPLAYED THE VISIT. THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IS RATHER ATTRACTED TO THE IDEA THAT FRANCE IS MAKING A BIG PLAY FOR SPAIN, GIVEN CORTINA'S FRANCOPHILE TENDENCIES. I SHALL TRY NEXT WEEK TO TALK FURTHER WITH CORTINA ABOUT THE FRENCH ANGLE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOURISM, FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLICIES, PRESS CONFERENCES, POLITICAL SITUATION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MADRID04677
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750233-0207
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750783/aaaacvog.tel
Line Count: 155
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 MADRID 4674, 75 MADRID 4676
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <19 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CORTENA
TAGS: PFOR, SP, US, UN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006